Report of the Committe on

Bible Tract, and Education Societies

Read before the Society of Inquiry

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Report on Bible Societies.

"The follower of Mohammed", it has been remarked, "may think as much of his Koran, as the christian does of his Bible and he may suppose that the diffusion of it would confer happiness: but whatever he may think of the book, which is the foundation of his hope, yet there is no feeling derived from it, which will prompt him to efforts for its diffusion"; it is the Bible alone which inculcates that principle of charity."

Again it is a recorded fact, "that while M.S.S. of the Hindu Vedas, and puránas, never plentiful in the country, are, from the want of the patronage of the native princes by whom they were principally multiplied, quickly disappearing in every part of the Eastern continent and taking their appropriate place, on the dusty shelves of the curious antiquarian, from the West, thousands of copies of the law of the Lord, are flying from the press, the appointed instrument of good, in all directions".

Now it is this inherent energy, this "Spirit of Life" which the scriptures contain within themselves, is the germ of hope to the christian that they will never perish; and every development of this spirit, is a bud of promise that, their leaves shall yet abound to "the healing of the nations." These developments so far as they have been made the past year, it now devolves on your committee to gather up, & present. And in doing this, we are constrained, by our very narrow limits, to seize upon a few strong points only.

Beginning with our own country, four topics particularly claim attention. The New Testament for the blind. The Bible in Schools,

The resupply of the destitute — and the furnishing of emigrants. —
For the preparation of books for the blind, the United States have taken
the lead of all other countries. — For the British Empire, something is begining
to be done in this way, but at present, the British society imports testaments
from this country. — The New Testament is now furnished in four vols
and is proving a valuable acquisition, not only to the blind, but to many
who from age, weakness or disease of the visual organs, cannot use them for
reading. — A person acquainted with the system will run through a
chapter, in just the time it takes a person with sight to read twice
the quantity, observing all the stops. — It is also in contemplation
to print An edition of the Psalms has just been issued at Boston
at the expense of the B & F Bible Soc —

The use of the Bible in common schools, is receiving attention in
different parts of the country. — Several of the officers in our colleges, &
other prominent instructors of the young, have warmly encouraged
the practice. — The convention of professional teachers at Cincinnati
published a report in which they say — "Your committee consider
that the Bible — no selection from the Bible, but the Bible itself, —
ought to constitute, the class book in our common schools. — Only
the Bible can spread over the whole ground" —
A petition has been presented, the present winter, to the assembly of the
New York, Legislature, for the enactment of a law excluding the Bible,
from all schools which enjoy the patronage of the state. — The committee
to whom it was referred, reported, through Mr Barnard their chairman,
against granting the prayer of the petitioners, and took occasion on
the one hand, mildly, but thoroughly, to expose the littleness and
malignity of the Spirit, which would banish the Bible from
elementary education, and on the other, triumphantly to defend
their inseperable union. — This report, which deserves to be studied
was adopted with only one dissenting voice. — A cheering token of
the respect to this book, which pervades the community. —

It may be added that several auxiliary societies are employed in furnishing every destitute child that can read, with a testament; and that the Young Mens Society of N.Y. City have undertaken to supply with testaments the Sunday schools of four states & one Territory — viz Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Michigan and Wisconsin.

The supply of the destitute, like doing good to the poor, is an interminable work. — The whole country has been gone over once — many parts twice, and some thrice or more; yet destitution prevails. — Reports from counties in N.York, state that, two, four, five, six & ten hundred families, were found in each, destitute, & have been supplied. The examination in Monmouth Co. N.J. shows a similar result. — In some districts in the state of Delaware, which have been explored, one family in four had no copy of the word of God. — Throughout Maryland, the proportion of destitute is every sixth family. — In both these states the work of supply is vigorously going on — The examination of other states, it is believed would show a similar state of destitution. — "And this occurs too in many places, where there is no regular ministrations of the Gospel, and few religious books, or means of grace of any kind." —.

The supply of emigrants, is most effectually prosecuted in in the city of N.York, as there is the great gate way by which they are introduced into the country; — and the young Mens Society of that city seem to be laboring with effect.
The whole number of emigrants which arrived there during 1837 is about 65.000 — of these about 16,000 were from Ireland, — 12,000

from England, — 3,000 from Scotland — 5,000 from France — and 20,000 from countries where the German language is spoken. — Their agent, Mr Hubbard, who has special charge of this province, is accustomed to board the ships in the river, immediately on their arrival and by cheerfully communicating information, respecting the country, climate, rail roads, lands, rents &c — secures an opportunity to hold religious conversation. To supply the destitute with Bibles to a considerable extent. — Some were found already furnished. — But during the year he distributed 2.117 Bibles & Testaments, principally among families, which upon an average of six persons in each, gives 12.702, or about one fifth of the whole number, which were supplied by this single society. — As might be expected, he occasionally encounters the opposition of the Infidel, and the taunts of the idle & vicious, but finds many interesting cases of destitution which it is a luxury to relieve.

In regard to the effects of the Bible on Catholics, they report that "Bohemian Catholics are induced to read the scriptures, we soon discover a decrease of hostility, a willingness to read religious Tracts, and a readiness to send their children to Protestant sabbath schools. —

We now pass to Europe. — In the British empire the great machine of Bible operations, is the B. & F. Bible Society. This venerable Institution now passing the 34 year of its operations, with an annual income of nearly half a million of dollars, is sending forth the word of life, through 2,300 auxiliaries, in the United Kingdoms, & 230 in the Colonies & other dependencies. — Our present brief notices must be confined to its system of domestic operations, & the state of the kingdom in respect to a supply of the Bible. —

It has divided England, into <u>five districts</u>, containing from

five to eleven counties each, - and placed each under the supervision of a general agent - Through each of these districts, a series of public meetings are annually held at such points as to render them accessible to all the population; These meetings it is designed to have attended by a deputation from the Parent Society; and by holding them on consecutive days, a single committee can attend a large number, with small expense of time. And that this system is carried out with a good degree of efficiency, appears from the fact, that of 1053, such meetings held during the past year, only 56 failed to enjoy a visiter from the Parent society.

The Society, during the past year, employed for the first time a general agent in Wales who could address them in their own language. - And his tours seem to have excited great interest among the people of that country.

It was the destitution of Wales which originated the Bible Society of Great Britian; - and, now to the society from which she has received 350,000 Bibles & Testaments, out of the depths of her poverty, she is causing her liberality to abound. - The interest in the work, seems to reach the poorest classes. - Throughout the extensive slate quarries, every individual in almost every family, give something once a year to the Bible cause.

The annual income of one auxiliary, 80£ in amount, was found to be the joint contribution of 5,000 subscribers.

For the first time, we have now been able, to lay our hands on any facts which would answer the question, How far is the population of Great Britian supplied with the Bible? - Three and thirty years has this mighty engine of

benevolence been at work, and what have been its results, on the little territory which is the seat of its operations. Truly it may be, said, after all, that they have not been in vain. In one district in the city of London, inhabited by 3.296 families, after a partial examination, 581 (about one in six) were found destitute of the sacred Scriptures. — And if correct information could be obtained with respect to the remainder, it is believed that this number would be more than doubled; which would increase the proportion unsupplied to one in three. — In a second district, of 850 families, 344 were without the Bible; — which is a larger proportion still. — And of 1.147 families visited in Whitechapel, only 138 were found to possess the scriptures. — In a third, containing a population of 70.000. there is but one solitary place of worship, capable of holding about 700 persons. — Here, from this circumstance, and from the want of active agents, it has been found impossible to form a Bible association. — By a return from 40 districts in this great Metropolis, inhabited by 19.365 families, 12.200 totally neglect public worship, and 4,000 have not a page of the Bible. Surely the world's conversion is not yet effected. — Our information respecting the state of the country is less definite. But some portions can be scarcely less destitute; particularly the high lands of Scotland. — How through many districts poverty reigns; rendered doubly distressing through the past year, by an extensive famine. — A population of 60.000, are represented as having neither bread, nor fining or seldom if ever any money. — They cannot buy the Bible, and great destitution of it exists among them. — Throughout Catholic Ireland, the destitution is great of course — Yet many things there are encouraging. — The issues of the Hibernian Bible society have increased during the past year. —

The London Hibernian Society have in their schools about 136.000 scholars receiving a scriptural education.

The Irish Sunday school Society repoat 127.488 scholars reading the Bible or Testaments, not one half of whom receive any instruction in the daily schools. — They have issued the past year 10.000 Bibles & 23000 testaments and report much evidence that the scriptures are earnestly desired and read with profit. —

The present state of peninsular Europe, with respect to the spread of the Bible is one of interesting suspense. — Like the prophetic day of Zechariah "its light is neither clear, nor dark." —

In Portugal there is no legal impediment to the circulation of the sacred Volume; Yet there are difficulties from other sources. — A more liberal spirit however, it is thought is beginning to pervading the kingdom. — Protestant missionaries are beginning to be tolerated; and through them, the scriptures are to some extent introduced. —

In Spain, although a liberal and independant spirit is gaining ground, the priests have succeeded in arraying the government, against the introduction of the scriptures. — The door had seemed to be opening. A decree was issued some three years since, permitting the free importation of books, without excepting Bibles and Testaments; and allowing every person to follow whatever religious his judgment approves. — Under this the Bible had been introduced. — In Barcelona alone 1600 copies of the Bible were sold in a single year, — A large edition of the Testament in Catalan was issued. — During the summer of 1837, 5000 copies of the whole Bible were printed at Barcelona; and arrangements were in progress for issuing a still larger edition at Valencia. — But the zeal of the Romanists was kindled. — In the language of holy indignation they declared, that "by an invention, rather infernal than the offspring of the human understanding the enemies of the church, have hit on the most powerful mode of obscuring the clear splendor of the faith we profess, profaning with sacrilegious hands the sacred deposit of the ancient Vulgate." — —

So soon as it was announced that the new Bible was for sale, at moderate prices, & was promised to the poor gratuitously, the Ecclesiastical governor of Valencia, lost not a moment in issuing a circular of pastoral instruction to his curates, enjoining upon them to prohibit its reading among their parishioners; not omitting to forewarn them of the pains & censures which the church had fulminated on this subject. — This circular bearing date July 4. 1837. was seconded by a fraternal appeal of one of his curates, whose name has reached even unto us — Jose Francisco Garcia — His letter of 5 of Nov last, is on many accounts a curious document, & we quote a specimen of its spirit & logic. —

"This is the legitimate production of which the cursed fecundity of that infernal society called Biblical has given to the light. — Its defenders & members, being engaged in propagating the doctrine of the so greatly admired reformer, Luther, spare neither labor diligence or fatigue, in order to succeed in their depraved designs. — Considering the danger, to which the incautious & simple are exposed, who give themselves up to the reading of a Bible without note or comment & with only the light & guidance of the letter & text, the innovators have but [illegible] to exercise all the powerful force of their talents & interest, in support of error, and publishing a Spanish Bible, which, — besides its being vicious, for want of scholions comments & notes, and illegitimate, on account of its not having been authorized by the church, is also incomplete, inasmuch as there are wanting in it six books, declared to be canonical by the Council of Trent."

As the ultimate result the government authorities of Valencia refused permission both to introduce the Bibles already printed, at Barcelona — or to publish another edition in their own city. — The periodical press however, do not shrink from animadverting fearlessly, on these exorbitant claims, & to hold up to the public execration the system, which arrogates to itself the right to grant permission,

to read & print the Holy Word of the Creator and Judge of all men, and which has ruled in such a way in Spain that for two centuries there have been printed only 12.000 copies of the Bible, & those altered, and sold at the enormous price of from 50. to 80 Sols per copy. — Of this system says the Valencia Mercantile Journal, "Ignorance & hypocrisy are its origin — darkness, its argument and its refuge". —